

20th CONGRESS,  
1st Session.

[ 189 ]

**MEMORIAL**

OF THE

**CITIZENS OF SAVANNAH,**

STATING THE

ADVANTAGES THAT WOULD RESULT TO THE GOVERNMENT,

FROM ESTABLISHING A

**NAVAL DEPOT AT THAT PLACE.**

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APRIL 28, 1828.

Referred to the Committee on Naval Affairs, and ordered to be printed.

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1828.



## MEMORIAL.

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*To the Honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States, in Congress assembled;*

The memorial of the citizens of Savannah, is

RESPECTFULLY PRESENTED:

Your memorialists, without preamble, proceed to place before you, the objects which have induced them again to appear before your body, having recently called your attention to the same matters, through the medium of the constituted authorities of the city.

Your memorialists acknowledge, with pleasure, the liberal appropriation made by your body, for the clearing and deepening of the channel of the Savannah river, and for removing the sunken wrecks, which have for many years been imbedded in sand, and obstructed the navigation.

Your memorialists now design to lay before your honorable body, facts and arguments, connected with the subject of the second part of our former memorial, viz: the establishment of a naval depôt at this point, on this river, at or near the city.

Your memorialists are able to affirm, with confidence, that the entrance to Savannah river is easy and practicable; that there are very few cases in which a ship cannot sail over the bar into safe anchorage.

Your memorialists know that your body has official surveys of the bar and river of Savannah, and on the comparative advantages of this and other ports in the vicinity, examined with the same general objects, your opinions and acts will be founded. We are willing, with deference, to submit the claims of this river, as a naval station of the United States, to the testimony of these documents before you; and will only add, by way of elucidation, the practical information which arises from residence and observation.

In the report of Capt. Stockton, now before us, he answers to the 7th interrogatory of the Navy Department: "That tolerably good water can be obtained, and without much difficulty." Your memorialists are aware, from long experience, and repeated declarations of ship masters, that the water of this river is of the best kind for taking to sea; indeed, that it is preferred to that of many other sea-ports, on that account. It can be taken in for use, at Four Mile Point, the distance from Cockspur roads eight miles by water. But should it appear that the water of the river would not answers the purpose of supplying ships of the United States, there would be no difficulty in procuring the requisite quantity from the city itself—where, with one

consent, it is approved, and considered equal to any water that is found in a corresponding latitude.

Your memorialists, in commenting further on the report of Capt. Stockton, are led to the expression of the opinion, that if his low-water depths be established as correct, and his rise of tide also, then such classes of vessels as do come up to the several points mentioned, and to the city, could not be floated. Still, however, we are willing to concede any preconceived opinion, which has been overthrown by facts, and such his statements are supposed to be, by actual admeasurement. Vessels drawing fourteen feet water come up to the city.

Your memorialists further remark, on the subject of supplies for a fleet, mentioned in Capt. Stockton's answer to the 8th interrogatory, that there could be no doubt of procuring every necessary article, by contract or otherwise, as must be done in other places. Let the arrangements be made here, which require supplies, they can be immediately furnished.

Your memorialists are not competent judges of the best positions for a Navy Yard; but when a selection is made, it ought to be carefully investigated, not only with reference to general advantages, but to the health of men who labor in naval preparations.

Your memorialists state, in relation to the health of this city and its vicinity, that it has been subject to great changes. They would strongly recommend a location for workmen in the city, or at a short distance from the river, during the summer months, especially at night; and there is an elevated point, not far distant from Fort Jackson, or Five Fathom, on the Georgia side of the river, whence there is easy communication with the city. They recommend Fort Jackson, or Five Fathom, as the most eligible point below the city.

Your memorialists affirm, that destruction by the worm is not known in this river, within seven miles of the city.

Your memorialists believe, that it will be plainly seen that the largest class of vessels cannot use this port, if a naval station were established here, by the Government; but they are decidedly of opinion, that all the documentary testimony of examinations and reports, will show it well adapted for medium class vessels, which will be most generally employed in this and contiguous latitudes, for the protection of commerce.

Your memorialists desire that this port be placed only in fair competition with others, for an unbiassed choice, by the proper authority, as a naval station.

If it be declared unequal to others in the vicinity, the award must be considered as made by the best judgment of the parties.

Your memorialists, in the memorial formerly alluded to, asked a survey of the port.

The request has been complied with, and the officer executing that duty, has fulfilled it. It appears to be a plain, impartial statement of facts, from which all leaning to any peculiar interest has been excluded.

Your memorialists are credibly informed, that Gen. Bernard declared this port and river to be very defensible at several points. We



know that Com. Bainbridge spoke of it as of extremely easy entrance and navigation, and on that opinion the surest reliance is to be placed, from his experience in such matters, and as he himself came in, in the ship John Adams, Capt. Nicholson.

Your memorialists state, that it is a rare occurrence for a ship to lie off and on, outside of the bar, from the entrance being so deep and practicable, and the navigation so plain and simple. The light of the United States, and the beacon erected by the Commissioners of Pilotage, mark the entrance as well as that of any port in the States.

Your memorialists would suggest, through your body, to the Navy Department, if this river and harbor, or some point in this vicinity, be made a naval station, that a place of deposit for heavy munitions and fitting, be established at Five Fathom, or Fort Jackson, and that the ships intended to be thoroughly repaired, be floated light to the city; and if only slightly repaired, that it be done by detachment from the city. And they add, that the motive for this suggestion, is the preservation of the health of laborers and mechanics.

Your memorialists believe, that a naval station is necessary, somewhere in this vicinity, for several objects:

- 1st. Because of the interests to be protected.
- 2d. The proximity to the West India seas, and the competent protection of our western commerce through them.
- 3d. From the gales which annually occur in August and September, which make it necessary to have an open and accessible port for repairs and supplies for government vessels, which must always be employed in guarding our trade with our western States, and our West India neighbors.

Your memorialists think it unwise to attempt to press on your body, the general arguments connected with the defence of the country, being satisfied that the common interest of the confederated brethren of these States, weigh with powerful influence on your body. We ask of you to establish a naval station here, because we believe its advantages are greater than other ports under consideration, for the same purposes. But, "Our Country" is our motto, and we desire to be actuated by it, in this memorial.

Your memorialists believe, that Savannah is the next important point on the southern coast of New Orleans. In the late war, our then enemies had so determined it, and had not our armies been led to victory, and our foes discomfited, it is highly probable that the force might have been turned against us, and at that period the opinion received very extensive credence.

Your memorialists beg reference to the maps of the southern coast, and believe it will be found that Savannah is well placed, at the proper point on a river which is one of the finest outlets in the country, and the way by which the produce of this State and part of South Carolina must find their market. The imports and exports of Savannah, have always been extensive. The former have decreased, but in the lapse of a few years they will begin to reach the previous standard. The exports can also be made the subject of investigation.

Your memorialists beg leave to show, that Savannah is a point of central importance in time of war, in consequence of the natural canals or inland passages, north and south of it. It can carry on a trade independently of an exterior enemy, and experience has proved this. Let Savannah be held by an enemy: it may readily be seen how commanding a point it may then become.

Your memorialists can affirm, without fear of contradiction, that several of the superior officers of the John Adams, (when that ship was in our waters in 1825,) declared Savannah to be the best entrance and harbor south of the Chesapeake. There are but two competitors for equality in this respect: Charleston and St. Mary's. The examination of these ports, compared with that of Savannah, will show its decided superiority. In addition thereto, the water is salt in both those ports.

Your memorialists have before them materials for extending this document to still greater lengths, on this part of the subject.

But, as your body will most probably be guided by the opinions and calculations of the surveying officers, appointed for that purpose, therefore please remark, in Capt. Stockton's report, "about one mile and a half higher up the river, there is another mud flat, called Four Mile Point Shoal, on which there is about eight feet at low water."

The ship John Adams lay for a fortnight, only a mile below this Point. Her draught of water can readily be ascertained. The order for her pilotage was for a draught of 17 feet.

Your memorialists, in further prosecution of the objects of this memorial, are unwilling to trespass on the time of your body. But it is needful to present ourselves before you, in such a way as to show that we ourselves feel an interest in our own endeavors to procure the object asked for. We ask especial reference to the reports of the examinations made of the bar and harbor of Charleston and St. Mary's, by Capt. Kearney, and to the same document by Capt. Stockton, in relation to this port. On the latter we have commented, and stated some facts, of which we desire notice to be taken; and, in addition to the comments already made upon the report of Capt. Stockton, we desire to state, that vessels crossing the bar of the Savannah river, have a free wind when it is either due north or south, or intermediate.

Your memorialists believe, that every article of supply for vessels, can be procured at any time, provided there be a want of them.

Of timber, any quantity can be delivered here for repairs; and by the aid of a very fine steam mill, at Darien, with that in this city, the best plank can be prepared, allowing the choice of hitherto uncultured materials. As before remarked, establish a necessity for any article, by its purchase for use, and there will be an immediate supply.

Your memorialists cannot assert that the number of mechanics for the repairing of vessels is equal to Charleston, nor shall we enter into the reasons why so many more are required there, but shall say on this part of the subject, if inducements are offered, there will be no difficulty in obtaining the requisite supply of them.

Your memorialists beg leave to state to your body, that sick sea-

men can here be taken care of, at any time, in the public hospital, or by provision made by the Government itself, for that object.

Your memorialists are aware that such papers as the present are frequently intruded on your body. In this we have intended to say that which was relevant to the subject before us, and have spared many details which might have been introduced. Our principal object has been to place the matters before your body, in a plain business form, that it might be clearly seen that we understand the grounds of our opinion, by exhibition of which we expect to make an impression on your body, and wish to insist on our advantages, not merely that they may be set forth; but that our confidence in them may be supposed to proceed from the conviction of our minds, founded on substantial evidence.

Your memorialists ask your candid consideration of the subject of their application. We abjure all ideas of favor which is not bottomed on the apparent expediency of complying with this memorial. And we could not honestly ask the Government to establish a naval station or depôt here, unless we were decidedly of opinion, that, besides the local advantages to this city, it was for the public good.

Signed by order of the meeting of citizens.

GEO. JONES, *Chairman*.

M. H. McALLISTER, *Secretary*.

1891

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

REPORT OF THE PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

FOR THE YEAR 1891

BY THE PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

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